



PHILIPPINES

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Statement delivered by

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**“The Equal Sharing of Responsibilities Between Women and Men,
including Care-Giving in the Context of HIV and AIDS”**

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Mr. Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to share some of the salient experiences of the Philippines in promoting the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including in care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS. As we look to fifteen years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and more than halfway towards the 2015 MDG targets, my delegation is particularly pleased that the Commission has chosen to devote its discussions on the persistent inequality between women and men, including in terms of their responsibilities. The Beijing Declaration emphasized that the equal sharing of responsibilities and a harmonious partnership between women and men are critical to providing a better quality of life for women and their families and enhancing opportunities to shape and design public policy, practice and expenditure for their own well-being.

Mr. Chair,

We are encouraged by the positive recognition that the Philippines has received for its gains in gender equality, not least by the World Economic Forum that has consistently placed the Philippines among the top countries which have closed the gender gap. This, however, only strengthens our resolve to do more.

The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men is both a goal that we aspire for and a strategy that we implement. This can be seen in our policies that aim to harmonize work and family life, such as provision of paternity leave benefits, and child-care services in the home, workplace and the community. Government is setting an example of an equal-responsibility environment where public employees, both female and male, can take special leaves allowing them the flexibility to attend to immediate family concerns and emergencies such as those relating to children's school enrollment or illness.

Inequality between women and men is often founded on stereotypes. As an innovative way to address this, community-based programs are implemented to capacitate fathers to assume greater domestic and childcare responsibilities. In particular, we have a program named "Empowerment and Reaffirmation of Paternal Abilities (ERPAT)" which organizes fathers into a network of advocates and models of males who debunk stereotypes and other attitudinal barriers that prevent men from sharing with female family members the responsibilities of home management and child rearing.

Mr. Chair,

Effective prevention and addressing of violence against women requires fostering a strong sense of responsibility among the men. In this regard, the Philippine government has instituted policies and programs to enhance male responsibility as a deterrent and a solution to violence against women.

Since the passage of the 2004 law on violence against women and their children, we have embarked on a tedious process of building the capacities of our duty bearers, especially male

judges, prosecutors, law enforcers and village leaders, to provide gender-sensitive services to abused women and their children.

Also, to maximize the momentum of preventing and addressing gender-based violence, the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women has helped organize a movement of men from various sectors, including leaders in their various fields and communities, aptly named “**MOVE**” - for “Men Opposed to Violence Against Women Everywhere.” MOVE recognizes that domestic violence stems from the stereotypical notion of the home as the “man’s castle,” where every member is his subject. Instead, MOVE advocates for a nurturing home where fathers and mothers are equal nurturers of their families.

Part of enabling men to be gender-sensitive and preventing gender-based violence is the effective rehabilitation of the perpetrators of domestic violence. In this regard, the national social welfare and development department has a program¹ that involves male support groups for the rehabilitation of the perpetrators. In 2008, the Philippines brought this strategy to the regional level by working with ASEAN member states to develop regional and country-level action plans to institutionalize the interventions for the rehabilitation of perpetrators.

This year, through the leadership of our national machinery for women, the Philippines will host an ASEAN Conference which will aim to identify appropriate policies and programs that can effectively tackle the links between HIV and AIDS and gender-based violence.

Despite the gains achieved in narrowing the gap in certain areas of life, gender inequality persists in the field of politics and governance. Filipino women continue to lag behind the men in access to top level political and management positions. Nonetheless, we are hopeful about a current legislative initiative that will ensure gender balance in decision-making positions. In accordance with the provisions of the CEDAW, the Philippines will very soon have a law that shall provide for gender balance in the allocation of leadership positions. (This bill also provides a legal definition of gender discrimination in the political, civil, economic, social and cultural fields.)

Mr. Chair,

The Philippines remains to be among the countries with a low prevalence rate of HIV and AIDS. This is partly due to the early passage of a law to prevent and control the spread of the infection, particularly among high-risk groups. Nonetheless, in HIV/AIDS prevention and care, women bear a disproportionate burden. Our approach to promoting the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men in the context of HIV/AIDS prevention and care is guided by the reproductive health and gender equality framework contained in the ICPD. Our approach thus involves encouraging men to be supportive of women’s reproductive health needs and to address their own sexual and reproductive behavior and concerns.

Through the Pre-Marriage Counseling Program, we promote men’s involvement in reproductive health and encourage responsible parenthood. The sessions highlight the role that each spouse must take in ensuring a well-planned, healthy and happy family. Also, campaigns for condom use and other safe sex practices have been initiated by government with the support of

¹ The “Community-based Rehabilitation of Perpetrators of Domestic Violence” Program

multilateral development organizations and through partnership with labor unions and employers associations. Furthermore, HIV prevention modules have been integrated in seminars for departing migrant workers, especially seafarers. Currently also, faith-based organizations are engaged in the provision of support and care for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Despite these programs, challenges remain in containing the spread of the infection, especially the transmission to wives and children. There is still a low level of awareness among the general populace on the modes of HIV transmission, a low prevalence of condom use among males and an inability of many females, especially those in high-risk groups, to ensure their safety in sexual relations.

Mr. Chair,

The current financial and economic crisis affecting countries and regions around the world should also be seen from perspective of women. In our case, Filipino women who work overseas, particularly in the health and care-giving fields, in domestic services, and in entertainment, are vulnerable to the impact of the crisis. To address this, the Philippine government recently approved an Economic Resiliency Plan which aims to secure their incomes and jobs and help other vulnerable groups like workers in the export industries, majority of whom are women. This plan includes a gender component, the *Gender-Responsive Economic Action for the Transformation of Women Project* or *GREAT WOMEN Project* that will enable women to have better access to credit, technology, training, information, markets and social protection in the midst of the crisis. The country has invested heavily in social protection programs² that directly help the poorest households invest in health and education for their children. Since human development goes beyond material provision of basic needs, the government also launched its “Access to Justice” Program that enables the poor, especially women and children, to pursue justice through increased knowledge of their basic rights, and creates a supportive environment within the judiciary and law enforcement institutions.

Mr. Chair,

Clearly, since the challenges confronting women are experienced across borders and regions, the UN plays a significant role in providing guidance and support to Member States in their pursuit of gender equality and women’s advancement. This is why the Philippines believes that, as a strategic institutional response, the UN must have a stronger, more effective, and more efficient architecture to deliver on programmatic and financial support for gender equality and women’s empowerment. We welcome the progress made in the discussions on the creation of a women-specific entity that is highly placed, ambitiously funded from both assessed and voluntary sources, has normative and operational functions, and a strong universal country-level presence. While the specifics of governance need more study, we support further development of the composite or hybrid model with effective modalities for civil society representation and participation.

² such as the “Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino” (Filipino Family Crossingover) Program or the Conditional Cash Transfer Program

The Philippines also supports the full, independent and effective participation of Paris Principles-compliant national human rights institutions in the sessions of the CSW, similar to that in the UN Human Rights Council and other UN human rights mechanisms.

Finally, Mr. Chair,

We look forward to this session's agreed conclusions, which should include a call for the adoption of rights-based strategies in promoting the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including in the context of the current financial crisis. The vulnerability of mobile and migrant workers, particularly migrant women should be highlighted. In this regard, we urge all States to sign and ratify the International Covenant on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families as a demonstration of commitment to address the situation of about 94 million migrant workers around the world, half of which are women.

We also call for actions to enhance the equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women in risk reduction and adaptation to climate change.

Thank you.